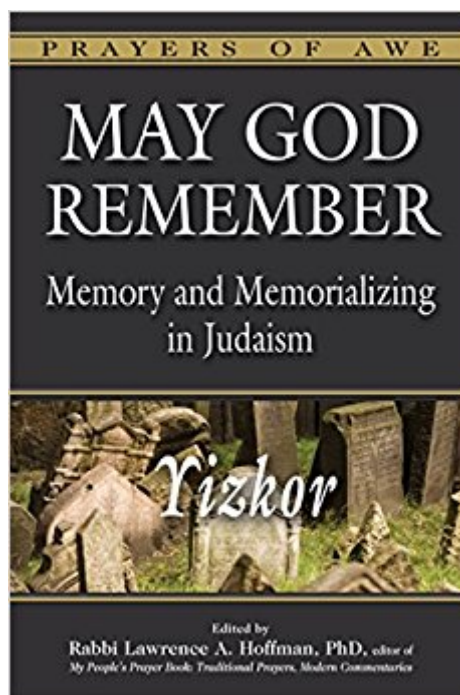


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# May God Remember: Memory And Memorializing In Judaism—Yizkor (Prayers Of Awe)



## Synopsis

An engaging and sobering look at memorializing in Judaism and why memory is so central to people. Through a series of lively introductions and commentaries, over thirty contributors—men and women, scholars, rabbis, theologians and poets, representing all Jewish denominations—examine the history and ideas behind Yizkor, the Jewish memorial service, and this fascinating chapter in Jewish piety. Featuring the traditional prayers provided in the original Hebrew and a new and annotated translation—this fourth volume in the Prayers of Awe series explores the profound theological questions at the core of this service and our own humanity: What happens to us after we die? Is there really an afterlife? Does our fate after death depend on the goodness with which we have pursued our earthly life? And more.

**Prayers of Awe:** A multi-volume series designed to explore the High Holy Day liturgy and enrich the praying experience for everyone—whether experienced worshipers or guests who encounter Jewish prayer for the very first time.

**Contributors:** Yoram Bitton, Dr. Annette M. Boeckler, Dr. Marc Zvi Brettler, Rabbi Lawrence A. Englander, CM, DHL, Rabbi Edward Feinstein, Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, PhD (z"l), Dr. Eric L. Friedland, Rabbi Shoshana Boyd Gelfand, Rabbi Edwin Goldberg, DHL, Rabbi Andrew Goldstein, PhD, Dr. Joel M. Hoffman, Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, PhD, Rabbi Walter Homolka, PhD, DHL, Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur, Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar, Rabbi Daniel Landes, Catherine Madsen, Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, PhD, Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD, Rabbi Charles H. Middleburgh, PhD, Rabbi Jay Henry Moses, Rabbi Aaron D. Panken, PhD, Rabbi Jakob J. Petuchowski, PhD (z"l), Rabbi Jack Riemer, Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, Rabbi David Stern, Rabbi David A. Teutsch, PhD, Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig, DDD, Dr. Ron Wolfson, Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel, Dr. Wendy Zierler

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## Customer Reviews

This is a great book, but not an easy read. I do a chapter at a time and think and pray between!

Well worth the purchase. Tells you all you want to know, and need to know, about Yizkor. The first 137 pages plus the 3 appendices are brilliantly written and thought out, explaining the theology, practice, history and liturgy of the Yizkor service. Unfortunately, and not surprisingly, the last 88 pages are generally not worth reading. They contain modern interpretation and reflection of Yizkor, highlighting the paucity of talent in the modern liberal Jewish world.

This is the fourth volume in the very informative "Prayers of Awe Series" edited by Dr. Hoffman where he offers essays by some three dozen rabbis and scholars on the most noteworthy prayers of the Jewish High Holydays, Rosh Hashana (New Years) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The three prior volumes addressed Kol Nidrei, Unetaneh Tokef, and the two prayers seeking repentance Ashamnu and Al Chet. The contributors told the history of the development of the prayers, how different communities had slightly different versions, and what the prayers mean. They also discussed the problems associated with each prayer. For example, the Yizkor prayer, which means "remember," calls upon God to remember. Does it imply that God can forget and needs humans to remind God how to act properly? Does the Yizkor prayer affect the dead in any way? If so, how can the deeds of living descendants improve the after-life of a dead relative? Assuming that the dead are rewarded or punished, relatives should receive recompense based on their own deeds. In each volume the contributors gave information that very few people know. This volume, as I said, addresses the Yizkor prayer that is recited on Yom Kippur as well as the last days of the three holidays Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. It contains 36 essays, including two classical ones by the late Rabbi Dr.

Solomon B. Freehof, *How it all began*, and the late Rabbi Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Kaddish and memorial services*. Some of the other essays address such matters as their author's view of what happens when people die, remembering the holocaust, remembering our past as a service directed toward the future, and the all-together different practice by Sephardic Jews called Hashkavah, literally, *Laying Down*, in the sense of laying down the dead for final repose. What is the origin of Yizkor? The custom of reciting Yizkor on the solemn holiday of Yom Kippur began in Germany in the eleventh century following the devastation of Rhineland Jewry during the Crusades, a trauma that was exacerbated in the fourteenth century when Jews were butchered because non-Jews were convinced that they caused the Black Plague. It was originally a personal family prayer recited to remember their dead, but it soon became a prayer recited within a community in synagogues on Yom Kippur. The custom of reciting Yizkor spread eastward very quickly and Polish Jews supplemented it with a prayer remembering the Jewish victims of the 1648 Cossack massacre under the leadership of Bogdan Chmielnicki. The Polish Jews also extended the recital of Yizkor beyond the sole recitation on Yom Kippur to the last days of the three festivals Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. The additional recitals were made because of popular feelings, but it raised a problem that has not been satisfactorily answered: Yizkor can fit into the Yom Kippur services because Yom Kippur is a solemn day, but the three other holidays are happy days, why add a somber prayer to mar these holidays. The volume also addresses the prayer El Malei Rachamim, *God full of mercy*, which is also recited in memory of deceased relatives and beseeches mercy for the dead. It is recited alone, frequently during the yartzeit, the anniversary of the death, as well as together with Yizkor. It is a late seventeenth century addition added because of the Chmielnicki massacres. Some of the contributors to this volume also discuss a third memorial prayer Av Harachamim, *Father of Mercy*, which custom has placed for recital during most Sabbath services, and is not combined with Yizkor. While the two other memorial prayers changed from being a recollection of mass murders to a memorial for family dead, Av Harachamim remains a prayer that recalls the Chmielnicki massacres. Today, Jews who rarely attend any other service come to synagogues to recite Yizkor and El Malei Rachamim, but since they do not come on ordinary Sabbaths, they do not recite or even know about Av Harachamim.

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